



## SACP on Women's Day

Jenny Schreiner is a member of the SACP 13<sup>th</sup> Congress Central Committee. The attached and linked document was written by her for publication in the Umsebenzi Online that came out on 8 August 2012, on the eve of National Women's Day.

Schreiner says, before aptly quoting Lenin:

*"The rights protected in the [South African] Constitution are rights that all women can claim, but they are not yet rights that all women, particularly working class women, are living. The equality in law and rights does not automatically translate into equality in access to jobs, resources, and protection."*

Summing up the situation of women in South Africa and the way forward, Schreiner says:

*“The material base of women's emancipation has to be in the integration of women into the economy without gender discrimination, the equalising of the gender division of labour within the household and addressing social and political gender equity.”*

Schreiner says:

*“...the struggle for women's emancipation is a struggle within a struggle and one that touches both the personal and the political.”*

This is discussed in terms of working women's possibilities or lack thereof, where:

*“Work and activity outside the home is premised on an inequality between men and women defined by their household or domestic responsibilities.”*

Schreiner then refers to Alexandra Kollontai, whose writing we have already studied in this course. Schreiner writes in a passage that helps us considerably in terms of the way that our course is problematised:

*“Alexandra Kollontai identified that the social basis of women's oppression lies in class relations and private ownership of the means of production and appropriation. She discussed whether there was a basis for a cross-class women's movement. She argued that working class women will more easily identify in struggle*

*alongside their working class menfolk than to side with bourgeois women against men.*

*“This is an important issue for the Party to engage with, particularly in the context of the Progressive Women's Movement.*

*“It should be clear that the hegemony of the working class and its organisation in all sites of struggle is weakened if working class women are excluded from that organisation.*

*“However it is equally important for working class women to assert working class leadership of the progressive women's forces in society and form allies amongst the multi-class strata in the liberation movement. The experience of relative discrimination by women across classes provides a unique opportunity for women of the middle classes to be mobilised in support of working class women's interests, and thereby become aware of working class issues.”*

Schreiner lays out all the possible permutations, except one. Working class women can organise in concert with working class men. They can also organise across class lines to create class alliance with middle-class women.

The third possibility, the one that Schreiner rightly or wrongly omits, is the organisation of working women as such.

The three possibilities are not mutually exclusive. It is not unreasonable to go for all three kinds of organisation.

It is reasonable to omit the possibility of a working women's movement, that is a dedicated working-class women's movement, if it is regarded as a practical impossibility. This is something to discuss.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Schreiner, Umsebenzi Online, Impact on Women, 2012.](#)
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